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ABSTRACT

The reports presents findings of a formative evaluation of "Crossroads Cafe," an adult-level distance learning program designed to teach English to speakers of other languages (ESOL). The study focused on how 22 programs were implemented in 6 different regions of New York State. The program is a collaborative efforts of the Department of Education, State Education Departments of California, Florida, Illinois, and New York, a nonprofit educational television production consortium, and a textbook publisher. The 22 pilot programs served 755 learners. The learning program, designed to teach learners without a teacher present, targets individuals literate in their native language and with some proficiency in both oral and written English, consists of 26 half-hour episodes about six ethnically diverse characters whose lives intersect at a neighborhood restaurant. Videos are supported by work units with language exercises and two resource books for teachers. A partner guide offers suggestions and reproducible masters for an English-proficient non-professional friend or family member to guide the learner. The pilot study used three instructional models (classroom, distance learning, and hybrid). It demonstrated the relative ease of establishing ESOL instruction using these models. Recommendations for improvement are noted. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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CROSSROADS CAFÉ

An ESOL Program for Adult Learners

Formative Evaluation Study
Summer 1996 Pilot Implementation

January 1997

Seymour Spiegel, Project Director
Irene C. Rayman, Ph.D., Evaluation Analyst

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a formative evaluation of *Crossroads Café, An ESOL Adult Learning Program*, which is a distance learning adult level video program designed to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The research focused on how 22 programs were implemented in 6 different regions of New York State. Researchers sought answers to what worked, what didn't, and why.

Crossroads Café is the product of a collaborative effort of the United States Department of Education; the State Education Departments of California, Florida, Illinois, and New York; INTELECOM, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational television production consortium; and Heinle and Heinle Publishers. This formative evaluation of the *Crossroads Café ESOL Adult Learning Program* was conducted by the Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE) of the City University of New York Graduate School for the New York State Education Department. Twenty two pilot programs with 755 adult learners were part of this study, which was conducted between June 1 and September 30, 1996. Evaluation data, in full or in part, were collected from all 22 programs.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE *CROSSROADS CAFÉ* PROGRAM

The United States is a nation of immigrants, admitting as many legal immigrants and refugees annually as the rest of the world combined. The foreign born population, with 21.2 million people, is larger than at any other time in the nation's history and is expected to grow. Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults comprise nearly half of the immigrant population, and by the year 2000 an estimated 17.4 million LEP adults will reside in the United States. In the last decade, only 633,000 out of approximately 4.25 million LEP adults were served by ESOL programs.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Crossroads Café is designed to teach English to adult learners working independently, without an instructor present. It is targeted to individuals who are literate in their native language and who have some proficiency in both spoken and written English. The main component of the learning program is a series of 26 half-hour episodes about six ethnically diverse characters whose lives intersect at Crossroads Café, a neighborhood restaurant. The videos are supported by collateral work units with exercises designed to develop story comprehension, language skills, and higher order thinking. Two resource books are also available to teachers. A *Partner Guide* offers suggestions and reproducible masters for an English proficient non-professional friend or family member who can guide the learner in his/her study of English.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION STUDY

Provider agencies with established reputations for prior high quality performance were chosen as pilot sites. Because the pilot period was limited to 8 weeks, quantitative pre/post data from pilot sites were not assessed in this study. Therefore, experienced, successful, highly respected ESOL administrators and instructors were selected to provide expert qualitative assessments of the materials and methods employed use din the pilot programs. Pilot sites were also selected on the basis of geographic location. Agency participation was voluntary.

TYPES OF MODELS

Pilot sites conducted programs that were either [1] a traditional classroom model in which teachers used the videos and texts in class with the students, [2] a hybrid model in which the students used the materials with the teacher, but the major portion of the viewing and textbook exercises were completed without an instructor present, or [3] a distance learning model in which, after an orientation session,

the students worked essentially alone. Four classroom programs, seven hybrid programs, and eleven distance learning programs were conducted at the 19 sites during the pilot period. Distance learning, accounting for 50 percent of the programs, was the most prevalent model. The hybrid model was used in 32 percent of the programs, and the classroom model in 18 percent of the programs.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The study design incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, including self-administered questionnaires, personal interviews, and focus groups. Information was collected from administrators, teachers, and students periodically during the pilot period and/or retrospectively after its conclusion.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF ESOL LEARNERS

Students were recruited for this pilot study primarily from adult education class rolls of the 1995-96 school year. These classes included ESOL (79%), GED (14%), and ABE (7%). The study population mainly included learners who were at the "intermediate" level. Eighty-two percent of all students and 87% of distance learners remained for the duration of the program. The typical learner was female (69%), 37 years old (mean age), Spanish speaking (46%), at least a graduate of a foreign high school (71%), a relative newcomer to the United States (median time, 3 years), and unemployed (67%).

REACTION TO PROGRAM MATERIALS

The overall reaction to the *Crossroads Café* program was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers rated the extent to which learners liked the program materials. Ninety-six percent of the teachers reported that students either "liked the materials" or "liked the materials somewhat." Two-thirds of the students found the videos and texts "average [in difficulty]" or "not difficult to use." The *Crossroads Café* video series was described by students as "interesting," "enjoyable," "engaging," "compelling," and "very positive." Students especially liked the fact that the stories portrayed "real-life" experiences and that they could "identify" with the characters and their struggles.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The *Crossroads Café* pilot study demonstrated the relative ease of establishing ESOL instruction programs using these materials in all three program models. Teachers and administrators reported that students worked longer hours using *Crossroads Café* materials in the distance learning program model than was found among students in other program models. The learners in all program models enjoyed their work and eagerly awaited the next episode. In the opinion of the teachers and administrators, this attitude increased "time on task" in all models and translated into improved acquisition of English language skills. In the opinion of teachers, 86.9% of students improved their English language skills and increased the accuracy of their workbook activities. Teachers also noted that learners acknowledged their own improvement in English language skills and recognized their increased accuracy in workbook activities.

The study clearly demonstrated the feasibility of using *Crossroads Café* as the basis of ESOL instruction. Moreover, the use of *Crossroads Café* to promote distance learning as a means of reaching out to heretofore unreachable learners was also demonstrated.

Three major issues need to be resolved before distance or hybrid learning programs can be institutionalized: [1] Teachers need to be trained in distance learning methods; [2] Program logistics require special attention to facilitate transfer of videos and text materials between instructors and teachers; and [3] A state reimbursement formula for service providers must be established that adequately and fairly funds school districts, BOCES, and CBO's which choose to conduct distance learning programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a formative evaluation of *Crossroads Café, An ESOL Program for Adult Learners*, a distance learning adult level video program designed to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The study design focused on process: how the program was utilized by administrators, teachers, and learners. The research focused on whether the program was successfully implemented, what interfered with successful implementation, and why – or simply "what worked, what didn't, and why."

The *Crossroads Café* program is the result of a collaborative effort of the United States Department of Education; the State Education Departments of California, Florida, Illinois, and New York; INTELECOM, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational television production consortium; and Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

The evaluation of *Crossroads Café* was conducted by the Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE) of the City University of New York Graduate School for the Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education of the New York State Education Department. Twenty two sites with 755 learners participated in this pilot study, conducted between June 1 and September 30, 1996. Evaluation data, in full or in part, were collected from all 22 sites.

II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE *CROSSROADS CAFÉ* PROGRAM

A. Historical Background

The United States is a nation of immigrants, admitting as many legal immigrants and refugees annually as the rest of the world combined. The foreign born population, with 21.2 million people is larger than at any other time in the nation's history and is expected to grow. Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults comprise nearly half of the immigrant population and by the year 2000, an estimated 17.4 million LEP adults will reside in the United States. As a result, ESOL education has become the fastest growing sector of adult education in the country. However, existing programs are unable to meet the ever increasing demand for education in this area.

The foreign-born population in New York State is among the largest in the country, with the majority living in New York City. In the last decade, only 633,000 out of approximately 4.25 million LEP adults have been served by ESOL programs.

B. Description of the Program

The *Crossroads Café* program is designed to teach English to adult learners working independently, without an instructor present. It is targeted to individuals who are literate in their own native language and who have some proficiency in both spoken and written English.

The program materials, comprised of five major components, feature multi-level skills, context-based learning, self-instructional methods, communication skills; and multiple learning styles.

The main component is a series of 26 half-hour episodes about six ethnically diverse characters whose lives intersect at *Crossroads Café*, a neighborhood restaurant. Each video contains a "Wordplay" segment, which demonstrates a specific language function and the language structures necessary to do that function, and "Culture Clips," a documentary style segment that examines social or cultural themes contained in the episode. In addition, *Worktext*, the more advanced supplemental text, contains twenty-six learner collateral work units with exercises designed to develop story comprehension, language skills, and higher order thinking using three graduated levels of exercises. *Photo Stories*, the supplemental text for those with less English proficiency, is a condensed pictorial tour of each episode, presented with simple dialogue balloons and four color photographs.

The distance learning configuration was structured with the anticipation that most learners would complete one episode per week. In practice, learners essentially worked at that pace, but exceptions were common among those whose English proficiency was relatively high. In Ithaca, some highly motivated wives of visiting Cornell faculty, whose English proficiency was low, began with *Photo Stories* and then rapidly moved successfully to the *Worktext* at the rate of three episodes per week. In classroom models, the more structured environment appears to have imposed a conformity of pace among learners that facilitated class discussion and group process at the expense of individual freedom in determining learners' own rates of progress.

Two resource books are also available to teachers, which include general instructions on program methods, episode-specific suggestions for optional enrichment activities, and 52 reproducible masters. Finally, the *Partner Guide* offers suggestions and reproducible masters for an English proficient non-professional friend or family member who can guide the learner in his study of English.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION STUDY

A. Selection of study sites

The *Crossroads Café* program was piloted in 22 programs at 19 demonstration sites in six regions of the State. [See Table 1.] Prior experience in providing ESOL instruction to adults as well as geographic location were criteria for selection. Provider agencies with successful ESOL experience were nominated by NYSED as potential pilot sites. Administrators at participating sites nominated experienced, qualified instructors.

B. Implementation models

Pilot sites selected one or more of three program models for implementation of the *Crossroads Café* Program. In the traditional classroom model, teachers used the videos and texts in class with the students. In the hybrid model, the students used the materials

with the teacher, but the major portion of the viewing and textbook exercises were completed without an instructor present. In the distance learning model, after an orientation session the students worked essentially alone. Teachers maintained contact with their students either by phone or met with them for a very brief exchange period at regular or irregular intervals.

C. Implementation Measures

The study design incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, including self-administered questionnaires, personal interviews, and focus groups. Information was collected from administrators, teachers, and students periodically during the pilot period and/or retrospectively after its conclusion.

IV. Pilot programs

A. Description of program models

The type of program model(s) selected for the implementation of the *Crossroads Café* Program at each pilot site was based on several criteria. Practical considerations such as the availability of funding and geographic distribution of the student population, as well as ideological considerations such as a commitment to particular teaching modalities or educational philosophies, helped service providers determine their individual program designs. Altogether, four classroom programs, seven hybrid programs, and eleven distance learning programs were conducted at the 19 sites during the pilot period.

Distance learning, accounting for 50 percent of the programs, was the most prevalent model. The hybrid model was used in 32 percent of the programs, and the classroom model in 18 percent of the programs. [See Graphic 2 and Graphic 5.]

B. Recruitment and selection of ESOL learners

Pilot program administrators used their own discretion in selecting learners for the pilot programs. Because of the short lead time provided by the State Education Department, program administrators contacted those for whom they already had names, addresses, and phone numbers. As a result, students were recruited for this pilot study primarily from adult education class rolls of the 1995-96 school year. These classes included ESOL (79%), GED (14%), and ABE (7%). [See Graphic 3.] Students were selected for the various program models based on ESOL proficiency as well as more subjective personal and situational factors. All sites provided conveniently scheduled orientation sessions for prospective students.

The study population mainly included learners who were the "intermediate" level with regard to ESOL (61%) as measured by BEST or an equivalent test. [See Graphic 4.]

Overall, the retention rate was high, particularly in distance learning programs. Eighty-two percent of all students and 87 percent of distance learners remained for the duration of the

program, a remarkable accomplishment given the extent of familial and personal responsibilities faced by participants.

C. Profile of ESOL Learners

The typical learner was female (69%), 37 years old (mean age), Spanish speaking (46%), at least a graduate of a foreign high school (71%), a relative newcomer to the United States (median time, 3 years), and unemployed (67%). [See Graphics 6 through 12.]

D. The Implementation of the *Crossroads Café* Program

The implementation of *Crossroads Café* was relatively easy to initiate, according to program administrators. Using a 5 point scale, where 1 indicated "difficult" and 5 indicated "easy," the mean rating for all respondents was 3.3. Administrators in the three models responded similarly. [See Graphic 13.]

The only problem associated with the implementation process was a "late start-up" in about half the sites due to insufficient lead time, delayed recruitment of students, and/or limited availability of program materials. To expedite the situation involving insufficient videos, instructional staff assumed responsibility for duplicating videos for distribution to their students, a time-consuming and often costly solution.

The relative ease of implementation may be attributed to four factors: (1) the caliber of the instructional staff, 76 percent of whom were "very experienced" in ESOL instruction [See Graphic 14]; the resourcefulness and commitment of the pilot program administrators; the perceived quality of the orientation and training conducted by NYSED for administrative and instructional staff; and the quality of the *Crossroads Café* video and print materials.

IV. PROGRAM MATERIALS

The overall reaction to the *Crossroads Café* program was overwhelmingly positive. Unlike more traditional approaches to ESOL, *Crossroads* promoted "a combination of reading, writing, and listening skills training." Teachers rated the extent to which learners liked the program materials, and the results were striking. The average rating on a 5 point scale, where 1 indicated "dislike" and 5 indicated "like" was 4.5, with 96 percent of all teachers saying students either "liked the materials" or "liked the materials somewhat." [See Graphic 15.] Mean ratings were similarly high in all program models.

Clearly the heart of the *Crossroads Café* program was the video series, which was described by students as "interesting," "enjoyable," "engaging," "compelling," and generally "very positive." Students especially liked the fact that the stories portrayed "real-life" experiences and that they could "identify" with the characters and their struggles.

The use of accents by the main characters was the only feature that had some negative implications for students, although most were able to adjust to this in time. Teachers generally viewed the accents in a more positive light, as an accurate reflection of our society.

The multi-level *Worktext* and *Photo Stories* were viewed by both learners and teachers as useful and welcome adjuncts to the video series.

Not all professional resource materials were available to teachers during the pilot program. However, they were able to devise and/or adapt *Crossroads Café* materials and other ESOL materials to meet their particular instructional needs.

B. Utilization of Program Materials

The *Crossroads Café* materials were designed to be used in a variety of ways — in a traditional classroom setting, outside the classroom, and/or in a combination of the two. In all programs, a number of factors including personal preference, time and scheduling issues, availability of books, videos, and VCR equipment, and program model influenced where students worked with the materials.

Overall, during the six to eight week pilot period, most work, 58% of viewing and 68% of reading, occurred outside the classroom setting. [See Graphic s 17 and 18.] As expected, nearly all students in classroom programs watched videos in class (89%), while those in distance learning programs watched at home (79%). [See Graphic 16.] Just over half of classroom students did their reading in class (55%), while most of those in distance learning programs did their reading at home (86%). [See Graphics 16 and 19.]

In spite of the time constraints imposed by the pilot period and the personal constraints faced by many learners, a considerable amount of the assigned work was completed. When all units are considered, 86% of videos were watched in their entirety and 56% of workbook answers were completed in their entirety. [See Graphic 20.] Those in distance learning settings completed more units than those in other settings, with 95% watching videos completely and 62% answering all questions.

One indicator of the degree to which learners applied themselves to acquiring English language skills is relative "time on task." Overall, the median time per unit was an hour an a half. Students in both classroom and distance learning programs spent two hours per unit and those in hybrid settings, an hour an a half. [See Graphic 21.]

Generally, students found the *Crossroads Café* materials relatively easy to use. Based on a 5 point scale where 1 indicates "very difficult" and 5 indicates "not difficult at all," the average rating for all units combined was 3.2, with two thirds of the units described as either "not difficult" or "about average" in difficulty. Students in the three program models rated the materials similarly, although they were perceived as slightly easier to use in classroom settings. [See Graphic 22.]

VI. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Program staff reported that students improved their English language skills during the course of the program. Using a 5 point scale, where 1 indicates "not effective" and 5 indicated "very effective in helping students improve their skills, administrators rated the videos 3.7 and the workbooks, 3.6. [See Graphics 23 and 24.] Using the same scale,

teachers rated the videos and books together 3.9. [See Graphics 25 and 26.] Teachers also noted that learners acknowledged their own improvement in English language skills and recognized their increased accuracy in workbook activities.

VI. DISTANCE LEARNING: SELECTED ISSUES

The *Crossroads Café ESOL Adult Learning Program* was designed to teach English to LEP adults primarily as a distance learning model. The data suggest that teachers in these programs developed specific pedagogical practices and procedures to ensure that students had unfettered access to program materials and were provided periodic supervision by program staff. Instructors went to great lengths to ensure that the "student teacher" relationship not be jeopardized and that a sense of "rapport" not be lost. When possible, teachers spoke with students personally to assess their progress and offer assistance; other times, they conversed by telephone. Detailed and conscientious record keeping was vitally important in order to establish a sense of continuity.

VI. PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The team of evaluators listened carefully to the opinions and advice of program participants and have formulated recommendations educators who decide to develop future *Crossroads Café* programs. These suggestions include advice in the following areas: expansion of program materials; methods for the recruitment, selection, and placement of learners; content and format for the training and orientation of instructors; and procedures and practices for program implementation.

The study clearly demonstrated the feasibility of using *Crossroads Café* as the basis of ESOL instruction. Moreover, the feasibility of using *Crossroads Café* to promote distance learning as a means of reaching out to heretofore unreachable learners was also demonstrated. The data support the hypothesis that ESOL distance learning with *Crossroads Café* can be as effective as classroom instruction with the same materials at a significantly reduced cost.

However, three major issues need to be resolved before distance or hybrid learning programs can be institutionalized: [1] Teachers need to be trained in distance learning methods; [2] Program logistics require special attention to facilitate transfer of videos and text materials between instructors and teachers; and [3] A state reimbursement formula for service providers must be established that incorporates suitable incentives so that administrators, school districts, BOCES, and CBO's will choose to conduct distance learning programs.

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CROSSROADS CAFÉ

An ESOL Adult Learning Program

All this work is very interesting. It helped me very much with my English. It is very good because at the same time I see the video, I also read about the same subject in the book and do exercises. In the book, you can see how words are written and in the video you can see how they are pronounced. That is one of the things I like the most. That is an excellent idea of Crossroads Café. Thank you. (A Crossroads Café learner)

I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a formative evaluation of the implementation of *Crossroads Café, An ESOL Program for Adult Learners*, a distance learning adult level video program designed to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The study design focuses on process: how the program was utilized by administrators, teachers, and learners rather than on how effective it was in improving English language skills. Programmatic and pedagogical procedures and practices were examined in an effort to understand "what worked, what didn't work, and why." The effectiveness of the *Crossroads Café* materials themselves were only peripherally addressed and were based on the perceptions of program participants.

The *Crossroads Café* program is a series of 26 half-hour video episodes that tell the story of six ethnically diverse characters whose lives intersect at Crossroads Café, a neighborhood restaurant. Each episode contains two interrupting documentary-style segments that teach language and culture in a more direct manner. In addition, collateral print materials include *Photo Stories*, a multi-level *Worktext*, a *Teacher's Resource Book*, and a *Partner Guide*.

The program is a the result of a three year collaborative initiated by a partnership of the private and public sectors to meet the English language needs of the millions of Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults in the United States. These parties included the United States Department of Education; the State Education Departments of California, Florida, Illinois, and New York; a partnership of INTELECOM (a California based not-for-profit production company); and Heinle and Heinle Publishers (language learning specialists).

This formative evaluation of *Crossroads Café* was conducted by the Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE) of the City University of New York Graduate School for the Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education of the New York State Education Department (SED). The pilot programs were sponsored by the SED Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education as one of several undertakings designed to introduce *Crossroads Café* program materials to ESOL policy makers and practitioners as well as to determine its relative success as a distance learning model for ESOL instruction. Information gleaned from this study will be used to formulate guidelines for administrators and instructors who will be involved in subsequent implementations of *Crossroads Café*.

Twenty-two sites, serving 755 learners, participated in this pilot study, which was scheduled for six to eight week periods between June 1 and September 30, 1996. The sites, which were geographically dispersed throughout New York State, were selected on the basis of demonstrated success in prior ESOL instruction.

Evaluation data, in full or in part, were obtained from 22 sites. Sixteen administrators from 16 sites, 24 instructors from 15 sites, and 488 learners from 19 sites completed requests for information, a noteworthy contribution in view of the time constraints imposed by the six to eight week pilot period and the amount and complexity of the material requested.

II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE *CROSSROADS CAFÉ* PROGRAM

A. Historical Background[1]

The United States is a nation of immigrants, admitting as many legal immigrants and refugees annually as the rest of the world combined. The foreign born population, now at 21.2 million people, is larger than at any other time in our country's history. During the 1980's, nearly 10 million legal and undocumented immigrants entered the United States, accounting for one-third of the population growth during that period. During the 1990's, between nine and twelve million immigrants — a record number — are expected to enter the country.

Nearly half of the immigrant population has serious difficulties with the English language. The 1990 Census reports that 25.5 million adults (age 18 or over) in this country speak a language other than English at home and, of these, an estimated 12 to 14 million are unable to speak, understand, or write English without difficulty. Consequently, a substantial proportion of the immigrant population is unable to participate fully in American society because of limited proficiency in English.

Moreover, this population is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 15 percent. By the turn of the century, an estimated 17.4 million Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults will reside in the United States. It is expected that 53 percent of the largest metropolitan areas in the country will have majority populations whose native language is not English.

To meet the needs of the emerging LEP population, ESOL education has become the fastest growing sector of adult education in the United States. Between 1985 and 1995, enrollment in ESOL programs increased by more than 73 percent. However, existing programs are, and will continue to be, unable to meet the demand for ESOL education because of reductions in federal, state, and local budget allocations. Classrooms are overcrowded, budgets are stretched, and waiting lists are long. Although a substantial number of people — approximately 1.8 million — are served each year, this figure represents fewer than 15 percent of the 14 million people who currently require assistance.

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[1] Source: NYS Education Department, Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education, Albany, New York, 1996

New York State is third in the nation with regard to the number of LEP adults who would benefit from ESOL instruction. Although enrollments in New York State ESOL programs have increased by more than 73 percent in the past decade, during that period ESOL services were provided to only 633,000 out of approximately 4.25 million in need.

B. Description of the Program

Crossroads Café is designed to teach English to adult learners working independently. This style of distance learning is conducted without an instructor. Customarily, an introductory classroom session is required of learners to ensure proper use of the materials. After the initial session, contact with a professional teacher is usually by phone. Occasionally, short private sessions may be scheduled for assessment or assistance purposes.

The target population includes adults who are literate in their native language and who have some proficiency in both spoken and written English as measured by the Basic English Test (BEST) levels 4, 5, and 6, or its equivalent.[2]

The *Crossroads Café* program design incorporates the following features:

- A flexible multi-level approach. *Crossroads Café* print materials are designed to meet the needs of learners at low-beginning through high-intermediate levels of English. Learners work progressively by using the same video series and Worktext at each successive level.

- Context-based learning. *Crossroads Café* story-lines portray situations that are relevant and meaningful to a foreign born population based on the premise that the importance of language to learners is determined by the situations in which language will be used.

- Self-instructional methods. The collateral print materials were designed for independent learners who might not have access to more traditional ESOL classes. To ensure that they are user friendly, technical language is minimally used. Self-checks and an associated answer key are provided for each unit. And students are encouraged to work with partners.

- Communication skills. The materials enable users to develop communicative skills by focusing first on the purpose of communication and then on the forms of communication, both written and spoken.

- Facilitation of different learning styles. Activities are designed to appeal to different kinds of learners. For example, those who prefer exercises

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[2] The Basic English Skills Test (BEST) is a criterion-referenced test that yields scores that are linked to a taxonomy of specified reading and writing proficiencies. Scores can be readily translated to other English proficiency scales, such as the California Model Standards Proficiency Levels and other proficiency levels of the New York State Placement Test. *Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC*.

that elicit more objective "right-or-wrong" answers may complete the fill-in-the-blank or matching questions on sentence-sequencing or on reading comprehension. Others may prefer the activities that elicit self-expression, the development of fluency, the development of meta-cognitive skills, or reflection on the learning process.

The *Crossroads Café ESOL Adult Learning Program* consists of five major components:

- **Video** The main component is a series of 26 half-hour video episodes that provide education through entertainment. The videos, which are closed-captioned, portray the story of six ethnically diverse characters whose lives intersect at Crossroads Café, a neighborhood restaurant. Each video episode contains two imbedded instructional segments that are directly related to the episode's theme:

  - *Wordplay*, which demonstrates a specific language function (e.g., expressing a person's ability to do something) and the language structures necessary to express that function (e.g., can, know how to).

  - *Culture Clips*, a documentary-style segment, which examines issue-oriented social or cultural themes that are dramatized in the story.

- **Worktext** Twenty-six units contain exercises designed to develop story comprehension, language skills, and higher order thinking for intermediate level learners. Three graduated levels of exercises are provided, including high beginning (focusing on words and phrases), low intermediate (focusing on phrases and sentences), and high intermediate (focusing on discourse and paragraphs).

- **Photo Stories** Simple dialogue balloons and four color photographs present a condensed pictorial tour of each episode for lower level learners.

- **Teacher Resource Package** To maximize the benefits of the program, two resource books are available for teachers which include general instructions on program methods, episode-specific suggestions for optional enrichment activities, and fifty-two reproducible masters that provide interactive opportunities for students in a distance-learning program with a classroom component.

- **Partner Guide** A guide with reproducible masters is available that can be used with a teacher or an English proficient friend or family member.

The material provided during the New York State *Crossroads Café* pilot included the first eight video episodes and the collateral *Photo Stories* and *Worktext*. However, because

of summer scheduling time constraints, pilot programs conducted by the New York City Board of Education included the first six episodes only.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION STUDY

A. Selection of study sites

The *Crossroads Café ESOL Adult Learning Program* was piloted in 22 demonstration sites in six regions of the State, as shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1
Geographic Distribution of 22 Pilot Sites

Western New York		New York City	
Erie County	1	Bronx County	1
Niagara County	2	Kings County	2
		New York County	4
Long Island		Queens County	3
Nassau County	1		
Suffolk County	2	Southern Tier	
		Tomkins County	1
Mid-Hudson			
Orange-Ulster County	1	Finger Lakes	
Rockland County	1	Monroe County	2
Westchester County	1		

Selection of sites was based on information provided by the New York State Education Department regarding the amount and quality of the sites' prior ESOL experience as assessed by NYSED. Participation by the agency was voluntary. Location was also a consideration in selection to ensure statewide representation of sites.

Teachers at each site were nominated by their administrators on the basis of the teachers' experience and expertise in ESOL instruction; in selected sites, experience and expertise in distance-learning instruction were also criteria for inclusion.

B. Implementation models

Pilot sites selected one, and in a few cases two, of the three program models for implementation of the *Crossroads Café* program. The models were defined by how the program materials were used, as follows:

- *Traditional Classroom Model*, where the teacher showed the videos in class and used the instructional materials as classroom texts. Learners were not expected to use the videos and texts at home.

- *Hybrid Model*, where the teacher used materials in the classroom and learners used them both in class with a teacher and on their own, without an instructor present.

- *Distance Learning Model*, where *Crossroads* materials were not used in the classroom. Learners used both videos and text materials on their own, almost entirely without the presence of an instructor.

C. Implementation measures

The study design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. The implementation evaluation was based on information collection methods that relied on self-reports by program participants, which included both periodic reports throughout the course of the demonstration and retrospective reports at the completion of the demonstration period. Data collection instruments included self-administered questionnaires and interviews.

The self-administered questionnaires included the following:

- *Learner Demographic Form*, which profiles the sex, age, spoken language(s), ethnicity, employment status, and level of education of each learner.

- *Student Record Sheet*, which tracks students' use of the videos and written materials.

- *Episode Response Form*, which describes students' utilization patterns and reactions for each episode of *Crossroads Café*.

- *Mail Survey: Administrators (post-pilot)*, which describes the program model, student population, program staff, utilization and effectiveness of materials, and the implementation procedures at each site.

- *Mail Survey: Teachers (post-pilot)*, which describes students' response to *Crossroads Café*, the teachers perceived effectiveness of the materials, and the program's strengths and limitations.

The interviews included the following:

- *Administrator Interview (telephone)*, which explored administrators' initial experiences during the implementation of the program with regard to the program model, the materials, the teachers, and the students.

- *Focus Groups: Administrators/Teachers* at regional sites (post-pilot), which explored the procedures used in the development, implementation, and operation of *Crossroads Café* as a distance learning model and elicited recommendations for program replication.

IV. Pilot Programs

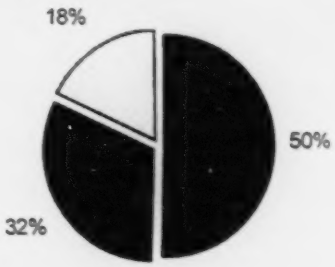
A. Description of Program Models

Program models — classroom, hybrid, or distance learning — were selected by the participating provider agencies for implementation of the *Crossroads Café* program on the basis of several criteria, including practical considerations such as the availability of funding and other resources as well as more ideological considerations such as a commitment to particular teaching modalities or philosophies. Program models were implemented without rigid prescriptors; therefore, the models varied widely within each category.

Four classroom programs, seven hybrid programs, and eleven distance learning programs were conducted at 22 sites during the pilot period. [See Table 2 for distribution of programs.] It should be noted that four of the 22 sites implemented more than one program model: one site had a traditional classroom and a hybrid model; two sites conducted both hybrid and a distance learning models, and another, a classroom and a distance learning model.

Graphic 2
Distribution of Program Models

MODEL	# of Programs	Percent
Distance Learning	11	50.0%
Hybrid Model	7	31.8%
Classroom	4	18.2%
Total	**22**	**100.0%**



Distance learning was the most prevalent model, accounting for 50 percent of the programs. Variations among demonstration sites in the day to day operation of this model were largely determined by the proximity of learners to the instructional site. One program was described by the administrator as follows:

> *Once the [Crossroads Café] program was explained, the student was given the book and the first video. The student would use the material at home and mail the video back in the postage paid envelope that was provided; the next video would then be mailed out [and the same procedure followed]. There was a 24-hour phone number with an answering machine that they could call if they needed help, and the teacher would return the call as soon as possible. Telephone or personal contact with the teacher was made [at least] once a week, for about a half hour each time. Assessment was based on personal contact and written reports of contact. [Assessment criteria] included improvement in written and spoken English and [the use] of English in daily life.*

The administrator of another program described a similar model:

> *Students were sent the pre-assessment by mail and when it was returned, they were sent the appropriate workbook by mail. Students then picked up videos once a week [at the school or a designated library]. Students called their tutor or were called by their tutor once a week. These calls and the correction of work averaged an hour in length per week of the teacher's time [per student.]*

A different distance learning model, utilizing a fiber-optic network, is described below:

> *Distance learning as we designed it enabled us to provide instruction at three sites that are miles apart, across a two-way, fully interactive, voice and motion video fiber-optic network. Distance learning classrooms are identically equipped. Students were assessed using Crossroads Café [materials] and the teacher's prepared test.*

The **hybrid** model, used in 32% of the programs, combined features of both distance learning and classroom learning, as illustrated below

> *The class viewed the videos. They divided into groups of three or four and worked on the Worktext activities [without the presence of the teacher] and freely discussed the episodes. The teacher explained to the class that the project wanted to implement distance learning, so they had to pretend they were on their own, [see the video again on their own, and work on their own. During] the last hour, the class together with the instructor reviewed the exercises, went over the pronunciation, and addressed the distance learning experience.*

Another administrator wrote:

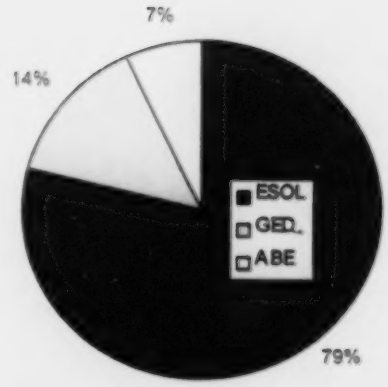
> *Students viewed tape 1 together in class, followed by a discussion of how to use the books and materials. Students then borrowed a different tape each week for home use. The students met one to one and a half hours each week with the teacher to discuss the tapes.*

The **traditional classroom** model, representing 18% of the pilot programs, was described by one administrator, as follows:

> *Students watched [the videos] with the teacher. The teacher directed the Worktext activities. Students were not able to do the Worktext independently.*

B. Recruitment and Selection of ESOL Learners

Graphic 3: Student Population Distribution



Students were recruited for this pilot study primarily from adult education classes taken during the 1995-96 school year, including classes in ESOL, Adult Basic Education (ABE), or General Educational Development (GED), or from waiting lists for these classes. The large majority (79 percent) came from prior ESOL classes; the rest, from GED (14 percent) or ABE (7 percent). Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the origins of the study population.

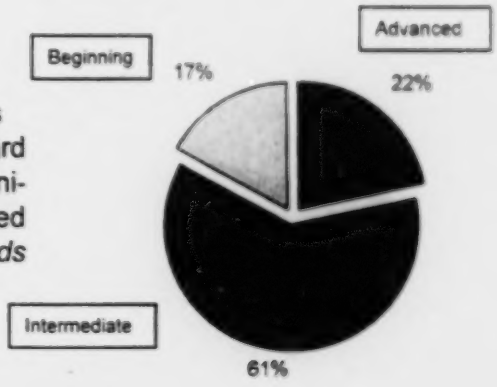
Teachers acknowledged that "no ESOL program fits the needs of every learner." Therefore, they indicated that it was important to distinguish prospective students who were apt to benefit most from a distance learning setting from those better suited to a traditional classroom setting. For the pilot programs, teachers relied to some extent on their own intuition in the student selection process. While a student's proficiency was undoubtedly a primary concern, more subjective personal and situational factors were also considered.

Students and, in some cases, their friends and family members were invited by teachers to participate in this program by verbal and/or written announcements. At some sites, fliers were prepared in both English and foreign languages.

All sites provided orientation sessions for prospective students to explain and demonstrate the use of both the videos and the print materials. The meetings were scheduled to accommodate as many students as possible and were held during regular class time and during specially designated hours, both day and evening. Interested learners were then screened using standardized tests such as BEST, or an equivalent and placed at the appropriate ESOL level. At some sites, learners selected appropriate levels for themselves. These choices were predicated upon the "level of comfort" each felt regarding the supporting text. In a few cases, initial recruitment was limited to learners whose specific English proficiency levels matched instructional requirements.

Graphic 4:
Placement of *Crossroads Café* Learners by ESOL Level

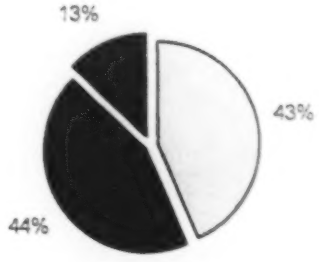
The study population mainly included learners who were at the "intermediate" level with regard to ESOL (61 percent)), as reported by administrators (n=15). Program staff generally agreed that this was the optimal level for *Crossroads Café* learners.



Enrollment varied, ranging from 8 learners to 59 learners per site, with a mean of 28. The number of students in each program model is shown below. [See Table 5.]

Graphic 5: Enrollment by Program Model

MODEL	# Students	%
Distance Learning	265	43.0%
Hybrid	271	44.0%
Classroom	80	13.0%
TOTAL	616	100.0%



The level of involvement in this program was remarkable given the extent of familial and personal responsibilities faced by participants. They were often frustrated that the demands of work, childcare, and/or homemaking interfered with their ability to devote adequate time and effort to their studies, complicated even more by their summer schedules. Yet, they remained "motivated" and "enthusiastic" according to both self and teacher reports. They remained cognizant of the level of commitment required in order to succeed. "This will take a lot of time to do it right and get the most out of it," said one participant.

Overall, the retention rate was relatively high, with 82 percent of participants remaining for the duration of the program according to administrators. Retention was highest in distance learning programs (87%) as compared with hybrid programs (79%) and classroom programs (75%).

The high retention rate may be due, in part, to the fact that all students had previous experience in adult education courses, either ESOL or ABE. They were known by their instructors prior to the start of the pilot and were recruited specifically for this program. All participants were aware of the "pilot" nature of the program and were likely to feel a greater than normal commitment to ensuring its "success." The short duration of the pilot programs was a likely contributing factor in enabling programs to retain their students.

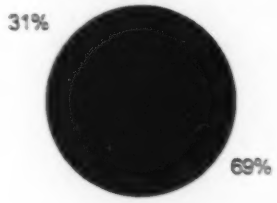
Learners who left the program appeared to do so reluctantly. As quoted by a teacher, the ambivalence of one student was clear: "Even if this had been easier, I would not have been able to find the time or energy to do this [program]. But, I want to!"

C. Profile of ESOL Learners

The typical learner was female, 37 years old, Spanish-speaking, educated (at least a graduate of a foreign high school), a relative newcomer to the United States (median time, 3 years), and unemployed.

Sex [Graphic 6]

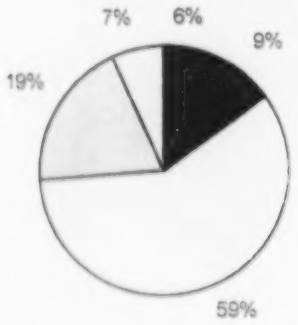
69% of learners were female and 31% male.



Age [Graphic 7]

6% of learners were age 16-20; 9% were 21-24; 59% were 25-44; 19% were 45-59; and 7% were 60 or older;

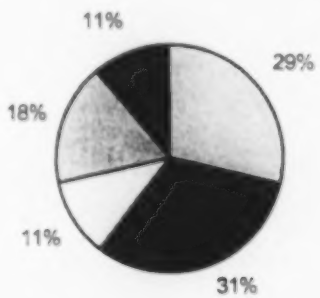
Age	Number	Percent
16 - 20	28	5.9%
21 - 24	44	9.2%
25 - 44	279	58.6%
45 - 59	92	19.3%
60 and over	33	6.9%
TOTAL	476	100.0%



Prior Education [Graphic 8]

29% of learners were not high school graduates; 31% were high school graduates; 11% had some college education; 18% were college graduates; and 11% had some post-graduate education.

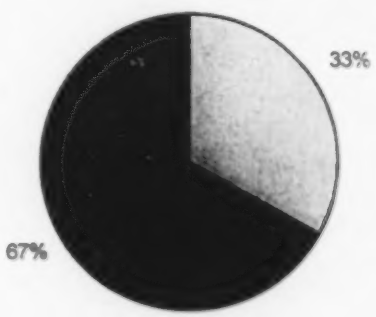
Level of Education	Number	Percent
Less than High School	137	29.0%
High School Graduate	147	31.1%
Some College	52	11.0%
College Graduate	85	18.0%
Graduate/Professional School	52	11.0%
TOTAL	473	100.0%



Employment [Graphic 9]

67 percent were unemployed; 33 percent were employed. Those who were employed worked an average of 33 hours per week.

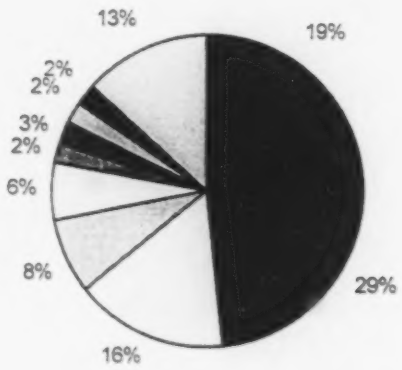
Employment Status	Number	%
Employed	161	33%%
Unemployed	327	67%
Total	488	100%



Country of Origin [Graphic 10]

29% were from Caribbean countries; 19% were from the ex-Soviet Union; 16% were from South American countries; the rest were from other countries.

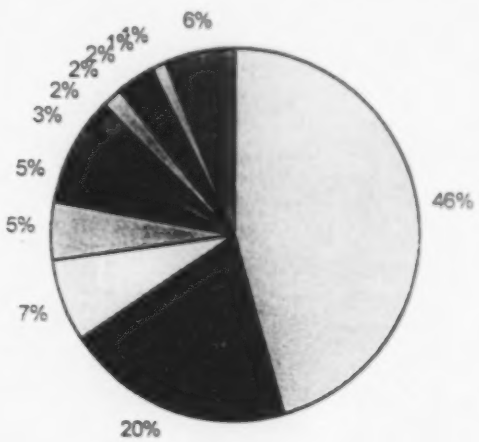
Origin of Students	Number	%
Caribbean Nations	139	29%
Ex-Soviet Union	90	19%
South American Nations	75	16%
Mexico	37	8%
China	29	6%
Poland	12	3%
Viet Nam	10	2%
Japan	10	2%
African Nations	11	2%
Other	63	13%
TOTAL	476	100%



Native Language [Graphic 11]

The most common native languages among the learners were Spanish 45%, Russian 20%, Chinese 7%.

Native Language	Number	%
Spanish	216	45.5%
Russian	95	20.0%
Chinese	35	7.4%
French	23	4.8%
Haitian Creole	22	4.6%
Polish	12	2.5%
Vietnamese	11	2.3%
Japanese	10	2.1%
Urdu	9	1.9%
Korean	7	1.5%
Ukranian	6	1.3%
Other	29	6.1%
TOTAL	475	100.0%



Duration of Residency [Graphic 12]

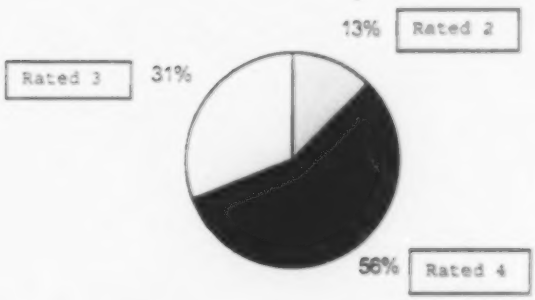
27 percent had resided in the United States fewer than 12 months; 26 percent, 1-3 years; 19 percent 3-6 years; and 28 percent, more than 6 years.

Duration of Residency	Number	Per Cent
Less than 1 Year	120	27.0%
1 to 3 Years	116	26.1%
3 to 6 Years	84	18.9%
More than 6 Years	124	27.9%
Total	444	100%

D. The Implementation of the *Crossroads Café* Program

Fourteen administrators operating 22 *Crossroads Café* programs (64%) rated the "ease of initiating" the pilot at their sites, using a 5-point scale where 1 indicated "difficult" and 5 indicated "easy." The mean rating was 3.3, suggesting a relatively easy implementation process. Neither 1 nor 5 was indicated by any respondent. [See Table 13]

Graphic 13
Ease of Initiating the Pilot Program
as Perceived by Administrators



Based on the mean ratings, the ease of implementation was similar for all program models. Administrators in both classroom and distance learning settings gave a mean rating of 3.3, while the mean for those in hybrid settings was 3.0.

The only problem associated with program implementation was a "late start-up" in about half the sites caused by insufficient lead time, delayed recruitment of students, and/or limited availability of the video cassettes and print program materials. The time constraints imposed by the pilot period required that instructional staff assume responsibility for duplicating videos for distribution to their students, a time-consuming and often costly solution. The staff's commitment to the program and to their students was demonstrated by the staff's willingness to assume this additional responsibility.

Aside from the inconvenience posed by this initial problem, program staff viewed the implementation process favorably. They were enthusiastic about the design and quality of the *Crossroads Café* program and its contribution to the field of ESOL instruction. Moreover, they took great pride in pioneering this innovative program.

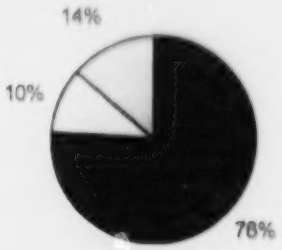
The relative ease of the implementation process may be attributed to at least four factors: [1] the caliber of the instructional staff, [2] the resourcefulness and commitment of the pilot program administrators, [3] the professional staff training sessions that prepared all participants, and [4] the quality of the *Crossroads Café* program materials.

- The instructional staff included experienced professionals with demonstrated expertise in ESOL instruction. Table 14 shows that 76% of instructors were described by administrators as "very experienced" in this area; 10% as "moder-

ately" experienced; and only 14%, as "minimally experienced." About one-third of all teachers were experienced in distance learning.

Graphic 14
Level of Experience of ESOL Instructors

	Number	%
Very Experienced	22	75.9%
Moderately Experienced	3	10.3%
Minimally Experienced	4	13.8%
TOTAL	29	100.0%



- The pilot program administrators selected the staff members, designed and implemented student recruitment procedures on very short notice, re-allocated financial resources to support the costs of mounting the programs, and played a liaison role between their teachers and the *Crossroads Café* office throughout the pilot period.

- Fifty-one instructors and program administrators (100%) from all pilot sites participated in *Crossroads Café* orientation and training sessions conducted by NYSED at four regional centers across the state. Sessions lasted four hours and covered the following areas:

  [1] Philosophy and practice of distance learning;
  [2] *Crossroads Café* video program and text materials;
  [3] Structure, organization, and administration of the pilots; and
  [4] State funding policies and practices.

Thirty-nine participants (66%) completed an evaluation form regarding the training. The sessions were well-received and described by all respondents as providing a "good overview of the *Crossroads Café* program and distance learning." Respondents also felt that the session "answered (their) questions satisfactorily." According to one participant: "We were not only given useful information about the program, but we also learned from the experience of others how to best run [*Crossroads Café*]." The distance learning training component was particularly useful according to one participant who said: "I was impressed at how much better prepared and how much more [the trainers] knew about distance learning than I did."

In addition, some sites provided their own staff development activities, which varied in regularity and formality. Topics raged from the general, such as "program planning and development" to the more specific, such as "the use of video equipment."

- The *Crossroads Café* video series and the supporting textbooks had already been documented as high quality ESOL educational materials prior to the summer of 1996. The entertainment and production excellence of the videos and texts virtually ensured a significant increase in the learner's "time on task" by providing another strong motivational component to the economic and social opportunities that mastering English already promised.

V. PROGRAM MATERIALS

A. Impression of *Crossroads Café* Program Materials

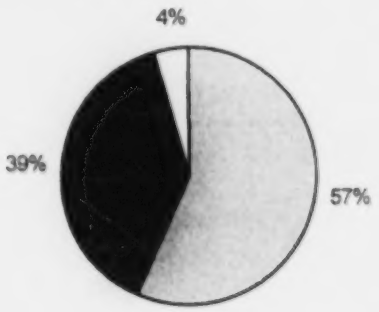
The overall reaction to the *Crossroads Café* program was overwhelmingly positive, based on feedback from program participants. Unlike more traditional approaches, *Crossroads Café* promoted "a combination of reading, writing, and listening skills training."

For teachers, this was an opportunity to be "creative," with regard to both instructional methods and materials. They were better able to engage students in ESOL instruction because language learning was a more enjoyable and enduring experience. One learner explained: "This is a great program because it is interesting. And, if it is interesting, we are enthusiastic to study."

Teachers rated the extent to which learners liked the *Crossroads Café* materials. The results were striking. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "dislike" and 5 indicated "liked," the average rating by teachers (n=23) was 4.5. Essentially, all teachers indicated that students reacted favorably to the materials. Fifty-seven percent said students "liked the materials;" 39 percent said students "liked the materials somewhat." Mean ratings were similarly high in all program models: classroom 4.5, hybrid 4.3, distance 4.7.

Graphic 15
Reaction of Learners to *Crossroads Café* Materials as Perceived by Teachers

Students:	Number	%
Liked Materials	13	56.5%
Liked Materials Somewhat	9	39.1%
Neither Liked nor Disliked	1	4.3%
Disliked Materials Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disliked Materials	0	0.0%
TOTALS	23	100.0%



Videos

Clearly, the heart of the *Crossroads Café* program was the video series. The videos were described by students in their written comments for teachers as "interesting," "enjoyable," "engaging," "compelling," and "very positive." Why were the videos so popular? Students especially liked the fact that the stories portrayed "real-life" experiences and that they could "identify" with the characters and their struggles. "They find a piece of themselves in these

people," said one instructor. The videos taught viewers how to act more effectively as individuals, as members of a group, and as members of a society, as highlighted by the following comments:

> "This [video teaches] that anybody can come to the United States and start a new career." (Episode entitled: "Opening Day")
>
> "I talked to my children that it is not good when Henry lied to his parents." (Episode entitled: "Growing Pains")
>
> "I learned that if you want to do something, you can do it. It does not matter if you are from another country, you have to reach your goal." (Episode entitled: "Worlds Apart")
>
> "I learned...that you don't have to be ashamed of the work you do or the person you are. You do not have to be successful or professional so that people will like you or love you." (Episode entitled: "Who's the Boss?")
>
> "I learned to find ways to keep our home secure from burglars by having a neighborhood watch." (Episode entitled: "Lost and Found")
>
> "I learned that in any business, the changes should be gradual and not fast, because many problems will arise if you try to change things too fast." (Episode entitled: "Time is Money")
>
> "I have learned that it is not only hard for me but for everyone who come from a different country. We all have different struggles. (Episode entitled: "Fish Out of Water")
>
> "I learned that children need a lot of attention from parents more than material things." (Episode entitled: "Family Matters")

The above comments serve to illustrate the psycho-social benefits derived from the *Crossroads Café* program, which are perhaps secondary to the intended goal of improving English language proficiency. *Crossroads Café* materials also enabled students to learn the meaning and spelling of words and expressions within the context of meaningful life situations. They also developed relevant skills such as using dictionaries, newspapers and other resources for improving their communication skills and for seeking employment.

Moreover, the videos provided a catalyst for conversation because they gave students something "in common" to talk about. "Conversation is a priority for ESOL students," explained on teacher. "It is important to get them talking," said another. A colleague elaborated: "The combination of video and text gives the students a jump start in communicating their thoughts and ideas to others. It [becomes] easier for [them] to express their opinions."

The use of accents was the only feature of *Crossroads Café* that was a source of concern to many viewers. While some indicated that the accents gave authenticity to the stories,

others were more apt to find them "confusing," at least initially. One student remarked: "So many accents! I'll never meet this many people with this many different pronunciations in my whole life." While other comments were more subtle, they did serve to illustrate the fact that students were troubled by the "different pronunciations." Some simply had difficulty understanding the dialogue; a few others expressed a real concern that they would learn to speak English with yet "another accent." In addition, some ethnic groups were "irritated" by the portrayal of the characters as "uneducated" or of "lower socio-economic status" and had difficulty identifying with them.

However, students soon adjusted to the accents. One teacher said that her students "learned to like the program very much because it gave them the opportunity to listen to different accents and ... to improve their comprehension of English as it is actually spoken."

Generally, teachers did not share the view that accents were problematic. On the contrary, the suggested that learners could benefit from hearing different ways of speaking. One teacher explained: "Some people will always be uncomfortable with foreigners, but this program is good because it breaks [this attitude] down." Teachers felt that in their classrooms, as well as in the community at large, people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are regularly brought together. Another, less frequently noted concern was that the characters spoke "too fast," but again learners adjusted to that in time as well.

Texts

The multi-level *Worktext* and *Photo Stories* were viewed by both learners and teachers as useful and welcome adjuncts to the video series. The *Worktext*, with its "tri-level" approach, enabled students to practice written English at a pace that was comfortable and/or challenging for them. The multi-level work fostered self-confidence among the learners as they witnessed their own growth in English proficiency. *Photo Stories*, designed for use by high level one and level two students, was also effective as a "warm-up" prior to viewing the videos, or as means of review to "jog" one's memory after viewing the video for level three and four students. Students and teachers felt that these materials contributed to improvement in vocabulary, spelling, comprehension, and, to a lesser extent, grammar.

Professional Resource Materials

Not all *Crossroads Café* program materials were available to teachers during the pilot program. Several mentioned they would have benefitted from the *Teacher's Resource Book*, *the Blackline Masters*, and the *Partner Guide*. Nevertheless, they used their ingenuity and devised and/or adapted *Crossroads* and other ESOL materials to meet their particular instructional needs. For example, one distance learning teacher developed a procedure for screening students that involved mailing the *NYS Place Test* pictures to students and completing the remainder of the test over the phone. Some teachers used the *Crossroads* story line to develop exercises that would enhance language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, or writing. For instance, one exercise asked students to write alternative story endings. Teachers also developed ancillary materials geared to special student populations. For example, one teacher working with *Even Start* families developed instructional materials related to parent literacy, employment, and culture.

Finally, some instructors expanded the use of *Crossroads Café* materials themselves to meet the situational needs of their students. The development of employment skills was

a popular topic at some sites and one teacher described how she helped a students prepare for a job interview:

> *One student had to stop [Crossroads Café] because she was busy looking for a job. I gave her additional work, like [a copy] of an [employment interview]. I went over the first tape with her to let her fully understand how to act on an interview. She finally got a job after several rejections. Later, she told me that the tape helped her a lot.*

A late addition to the pilot undertaking was the inclusion of an Adult Basic Education (ABE) class for native English speakers for the purpose assessing the appropriateness of *Crossroads* materials with that population. The instructor reported that students found the materials "eye catching," but not academically challenging. ABE students are bent on improving their reading and writing skills in order to raise their GED scores. They are less concerned with improving conversational skills. Moreover, the materials dealing with acculturation and socialization were irrelevant to their needs.

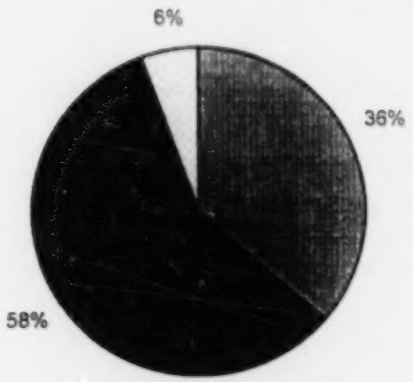
B. Utilization of Program Materials
Where were the materials used?

Crossroads Café program materials were designed to be utilized in a variety of ways — in a traditional classroom setting, outside the classroom, and/or in a combination of the two. Obviously, classroom use was not an option for those in distance learning modalities; however, materials were to used some extent during scheduled meetings between learners and teachers. In all program models, a number of factors including personal preference, time and scheduling issues, availability of books, videos, and VCR equipment, and other issues influenced where the materials were used.

Graphic 16 shows that overall, most viewing (58%) occurred outside the classroom. However, when the three models are compared, viewing patterns change. [See Graphic 17.] Nearly all students in classroom programs (89%) watched videos in class. Those in distance learning settings (79%) watched videos at home. Students in hybrid programs were more likely to watch videos in class than elsewhere (59%), but a sizeable number watched at home (33%). Very few reported watching videos both at home and in class.

Graphic 16: Where Were Videos Watched?

	VIDEOS			
Unit #	Class	Outside	Both	TOTAL
1	75	114	11	200
2	59	104	9	172
3	93	96	15	204
4	66	83	13	162
5	48	81	6	135
6	46	77	8	131
7	8	57	2	67
8	15	44	2	61
Totals	410	656	66	1,132
Per Cent	36%	58%	6%	100%



Graphic 17: Viewing Sites by Program Model

	Program Model					
	Classroom	%	Hybrid	%	Distance	%
In Class	42	89.4%	234	59.2%	137	16.8%
Outside	1	2.1%	130	32.9%	645	79.1%
Both	4	8.5%	31	7.8%	33	4.0%
Total	47	100.0%	395	100.0%	815	100.0%

Graphic 18 shows that overall most reading (68 percent) work was completed outside the classroom. Again, when the three models are compared, work patterns change. [See Graphic 19.] Classroom students were more likely to use their workbooks in class (55%) than elsewhere. A substantial proportion of these students (35%), however, did their work both in class and elsewhere. Students in hybrid programs were almost as likely to do their work in class (48%) as elsewhere (39%). Distance learners clearly did most of their work outside of class, as would be expected (85%).

Graphic 18
Where was Reading Done?

Worktext / Photo Stories

Unit #	Class	Outside	Both	TOTAL
1	43	118	18	179
2	23	111	18	152
3	44	114	26	184
4	27	93	21	141
5	23	93	20	136
6	23	86	15	124
7	9	51	7	67
8	14	41	2	57
Totals	206	707	127	1,040
	20%	68%	12%	100%

Graphic 19: Textbook Work Sites by Program Model

	Program Model					
	Classroom	%	Hybrid	%	Distance	%
In Class	22	55.0%	154	47.7%	42	5.3%
Outside	4	10.0%	126	39.0%	679	85.5%
Both	14	35.0%	43	13.3%	73	9.2%
	40	100.0%	323	100.0%	794	100.0%

How difficult was the material?

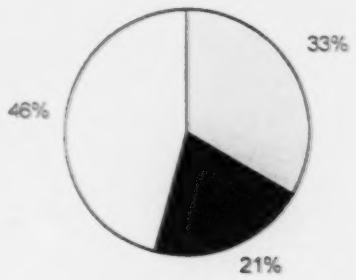
Generally, the video and written materials were not perceived as difficult by the students. Based upon a 5-point scale, where 1 indicates "very difficult" and 5 indicates "not difficult at all," the mean scores for videos ranged from 3.1 to 3.4 and the mean scores for books ranged from 3.0 to 3.5 for the 8 individual units. Overall, the videos and textbooks received an average rating of 3.2 for all units combined, with two-thirds of the units described as either "not difficult" or of "average" difficulty. For the most part, students in the three

models rated the materials similarly, although those in the classroom models found them slightly easier to use, with an average rating of 3.4 for the videos and 3.5 for the books. Books were also rated less difficult in hybrid programs, but the videos were not.

Graphic 20: Perceived Level of Difficulty

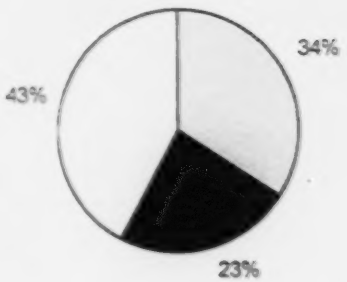
Student Responses re: Video

Unit #	Difficult	Average	Not Difficult	TOTAL
1	63	36	92	191
2	48	39	84	171
3	62	44	93	199
4	45	36	68	149
5	55	24	60	139
6	48	27	55	130
7	26	15	30	71
8	22	9	29	60
Totals	369	230	511	1,110
	33%	21%	46%	100%



Student Responses re: Worktext

Unit #	Difficult	Average	Not Difficult	TOTAL
1	65	55	82	202
2	60	38	77	175
3	67	51	85	203
4	55	36	72	163
5	51	29	57	137
6	44	26	62	132
7	27	15	25	67
8	10	6	16	32
Totals	379	256	476	1,111
%	34%	23%	43%	100%



Mean Ratings by Learners of Perceived Level of Difficulty

(1 = very difficult; 5 = very easy)

	Videos	Textbooks
Classroom	3.4	3.5
Hybrid	3.2	3.5
Distance	3.1	3.1
All Programs	3.2	3.2

The large majority of students worked independently, with the help of family or friends. At least 70 percent of learners reported that they had no help on any of the units. They did, however, rely to some extent on the answer key in completing written assignments. At least half and as many as two-thirds of learners used it to check their work for "all" or "some" of the questions in each unit.

How much work was completed?

In spite of the time constraints imposed by the pilot period and the personal constraints faced by many learners as they juggled family, work, and other responsibilities, a considerable amount of the assigned work was completed.

Video assignments, however, were more likely to be completed than written assignments. When all units are considered, 86 percent of the videos were watched in their entirety, while 56 percent of the workbook answers were completed in their entirety. [See Table 20.] When students in the three program models are compared, those in distance learning settings were the most diligent, with 95% watching all videos completely and 62% answering all textbook questions.

It is likely that video watching accounted for a substantial portion of the time devoted to each unit. Reports by teachers, as well as reports from students themselves, indicated that videos were typically watched more than once, and in some cases as many as six or seven times each. "I watched the video many time to help me understand it," said one student. It is not clear to what extent the difficulties with accents, the speed of the dialogue, or other factors contributed to the need for repeated viewings.

Graphic 21
How Much Work Was Completed by Learners?

	Percent Watching Each Video Unit Completely	Percent Answering All Questions for Each Unit
Classroom	78%	38%
Hybrid	79%	37%
Distance Learning	95%	62%
All Programs	86%	56%

The distance learning results can be attributed to the opportunity these students had to work at their own rates and at convenient times and places. The classroom setting is, by definition, constraining in regard to both time and place. Moreover, while classroom instruction may provide more opportunity for group discussion of the units, these discussions generally decrease the time available in class for students to complete their individual written work.

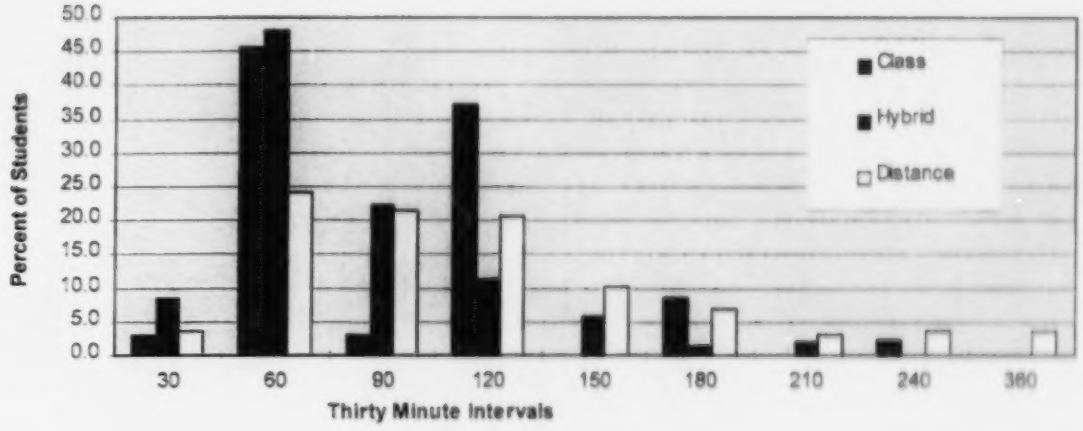
Time On Task

One indicator of the degree to which learners applied themselves to acquiring English language skills is relative "time on task." Total minutes spent with each unit may be an indication of the motivational value of the materials. Increased total minutes may relate to the ease with which the materials can be used, as well as the learner's perception of his/her own success in mastering the materials. Additional "time on task" may be considered beneficial, as it is likely to result in enhanced acquisition of language proficiency.

Median time per unit spent by pilot participants in all program models was an hour and a half. When program models are compared, some notable differences are apparent. [See Graphic 22.] The median "time on task" per unit spent by students in classroom and distance learning settings was 120 minutes, while in hybrid programs the median "time on task" was 90 minutes.

Graphic 22: Time on Task per Unit by Program Model

	Percentage of Students		
Minutes	Class	Hybrid	Distance
0-30	2.9	8.5	3.5
31-60	45.7	48.1	24.2
61-90	2.9	22.2	21.5
91-120	37.1	11.3	20.5
121-150	0.0	5.7	10.1
151-180	8.6	1.4	6.8
181-210	0.0	1.9	3.0
211-240	2.3	0.0	3.5
241-360	0.0	0.0	3.6



Graphic 22 graphically illustrates the comparative "time on task" patterns found among the learners in the three model types. Among the classroom model learners, 88.6% are found in the first two clearly defined one hour intervals. With little or no work outside of the classroom, the graph shows the preponderance of classroom learners at those intervals. Despite a median completion time among classroom learners of 120 minutes, 48.6% completed each unit in 60 minutes or less. Only the precise separation of discrete classroom meetings extended the median to the full 120 minutes.

Hybrid learners' completion periods are more smoothly distributed through the intermediate time periods. Yet 90.1% of the hybrid model learners are found to have completed work on the individual units by 120 minutes as well and demonstrate no real increased time per

unit when compared with their classroom counterparts. The hybrid model median time spent per unit was 60 minutes, less than the median shown for classroom learners. However, the distribution curve indicates a slower rate of completion and a significant number of hybrid model students completing units on their own at the 90 minute mark and more than 5% completing at 150 minutes. Yet overall, the difference in time on task between classroom and hybrid model learners is not significant.

On the same scale, the distribution of distance learners who completed their units was much wider, indicating a significantly slower fall off of time spent and a much longer "time on task" per unit than among the learners in other model programs. The median length of time spent by distance learners on each unit was 120 minutes, but the extension by learners to 180 minutes and more is clearly shown in the data and represents 16.9% of the distance learners, a truly significant number.

The additional "time on task " spent by distance learners may be the result of the inherent freedom that distance learning provides. Distance learners not only can choose when to study and how long to study, but they can select an environment that is comfortable and well suited to study. If materials are attractive, effective, and entertaining, distance learners are likely to be as highly motivated by the materials as they are to become fluent in their new language.

In contrast with the standard measurement of contact hours as an indicator of time spent acquiring English language proficiency, "time on task" is certainly broader, less precise, and more likely subject to the vagaries of student reporting. Yet, contact hours, because they reflect only actual classroom activity, are also unrealistic as an indicator of student effort. Contact hours cannot reflect the wide variation in student study patterns, student needs, and student motivation that can be more readily inferred from "time on task" data.

Contact hours are defined as the number of students in class multiplied by the total number of classroom hours of instruction for that class. Traditionally, adult education activities have been supported by state funds transferred to provider agencies via a contact hour formula. In a traditional classroom setting, contact hours reflect accurately the number of instructor hours and the number of students served. However, if the classroom setting is altered as in distance learning or in the hybrid model, a non-traditional formula must be devised that can accurately reflect the provider agency's true level of effort.

The best indicators might be a careful comparison of both measurements, in which relative tendencies are likely to appear. Inferences drawn from an assessment of both data are more likely to reveal how much effort was committed to acquiring English proficiency than either one alone. Additionally, "time on task" is likely to give a greater insight into the independent reaction of the learners' experience with the program materials than any other single source of data.

The collected data indicate that, on average, the instructional hours spent with students varied considerably by model. The traditional classroom model was structured so that

each instructor spent approximately 6 hours per week before an average size class of 20 students for a seven week period. Calculated in the traditional manner, the total for this instructional configuration equaled 840 contact hours.

Similarly, in the hybrid model, instructors spent 2 hours per week with each class that averaged 39 students for a seven week period. For this configuration, the total equaled 546 contact hours.

For the distance learning model, the instructor spent approximately 45 minutes per week alone with each student plus one two hour session with all students during the orientation session. Therefore, during the first week, 24 students met for 2 hours with the instructor, which equals 48 contact hours. During the first week, the instructor began meeting students individually. Each week the teacher spent 15 hours working with 20 students, one at a time. Contact hours per week, therefore, equaled 15 per week or 105 contact hours for seven weeks plus the initial 48 hours of orientation. Therefore, the total for a seven week distance learning program for 24 learners was 153 contact hours.

In comparison, the total average pilot contact hours were as follows:

Classroom Model [20 students]	840 Contact Hours =	**42 hours/student**
Hybrid Model [39 students]	546 Contact Hours =	**14 hours/student**
Distance Learning Model [20 students] . . .	153 Contact Hours =	**6 hours/student**

These totals are representative of instructional time spent by teachers in direct contact with their students. Under the New York State formula which reimburses costs based upon contact hour, the classroom model is by far the most expensive for the state. However, if hybrid or distance learning models can be as effective in teaching English with *Crossroads Café* videos and texts, then state costs could be reduced significantly.

Although reports reveal a very wide range, measurements of "time on task" indicate that learners tend to spend approximately 25% more "time on task" in distance learning models than in a hybrid model or when confined to classroom instruction alone. The data also reveal a significantly higher percentage of unit and video viewing completion for distance learners. Yet, evidence indicates that for distance learners the reduced "contact hours" had no harmful effect on language acquisition. [See Graphics 23 through 28 and accompanying explanatory remarks.]

VI. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

This evaluation study was designed to elicit information that would provide guidance to future ESOL teachers and to program administrators in how to design and conduct hybrid and distance learning *Crossroads Café* ESOL programs.

Certainly, this study was not designed to measure program outcome in terms of improvement in English literacy. The study team and program participants agreed that the duration of the pilot period was too brief to make such an assessment. Clearly, we have seen that both teachers and learners responded well to the program materials. Whether or not the

videos and books contributed to improvement in English languages skills and proficiency remains speculative, and at this time conclusions can only be based on subjective experiential and anecdotal evidence.

Program staff reported that students improved their English language skills during the course of the pilot. Administrators (n=15) were asked to rate the effectiveness of both videos and workbooks using a 5-point scale, where 1 indicated "not effective" and 5 indicated "very effective." Videos received an average rating of 3.7, with 15 percent of respondent saying they were "very effective" and another 54 percent saying they were "effective. Workbooks received a similar rating of 3.6, with 8 percent of respondents saying they were "very effective" and 54 percent saying they were "effective."

Graphic 23: Effectiveness of *Crossroads Café* Materials
As Perceived by Administrators

ALL PROGRAMS

	Videos		Textbooks	
	Number	%	Number	%
Very Effective	2	15%	1	8%
Effective	7	54%	7	54%
Somewhat Effective	3	23%	4	31%
Not Too Effective	0	0%	1	8%
Not Effective At All	1	8%	0	0%
	13	100%	13	100%

Graphic 24: Effectiveness of *Crossroads Cafe* Videos by Model
As Perceived by Administrators

	Classroom		Hybrid		Distance Learning	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very Effective	0	0%	1	17%	2	29%
Effective	2	50%	4	67%	3	43%
Somewhat Effective	2	50%	1	17%	1	14%
Not Too Effective	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%
Not Effective At All	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	4	100%	6	100%	7	100%

Graphic 25: Effectiveness of the Textbooks by Model
As Perceived by Administrators

	Classroom		Hybrid		Distance Learning	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very Effective	1	25%	1	14%	0	0%
Effective	2	50%	4	57%	4	67%
Somewhat Effective	1	25%	1	14%	2	33%
Not Too Effective	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%
Not Effective At All	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Totals	4	100%	7	100%	6	100%

Eighty-four percent of the administrators of the hybrid programs rated the videos as "very effective" or "effective," while seventy-two percent of the distance learning administrators and only fifty percent of classroom administrators rated them so.

The administrators were somewhat more uniform in their ratings of the text materials. These materials were rated as "very effective" or "effective" by 75% of classroom program administrators, by 71% of hybrid program administrators, and 67% of distance learning administrators.

Teachers were also asked to rate the effectiveness of program materials, books and videos combined, in helping students improve their language skills. Clearly, teachers had more opportunity than administrators to assess the performance of program participants. Using the same 5-point scale, the average rating was 3.9 with 13% of teachers (n=24) saying they were "very effective" and 75% saying they were "effective." [See Graphics 26 and 28.]

Graphic 26: Effectiveness of *Crossroads Café* Program Materials As Perceived by Teachers

	Number	%
Very Effective	3	13%
Effective	18	75%
Somewhat Effective	2	8%
Not Too Effective	0	0%
Not Effective	1	4%
Total	24	100%

Teachers in the three program models rated the materials similarly. Classroom 4.1; hybrid 3.9; distance learning 3.8. [Scale: 1 = not effective; 5 = very effective]

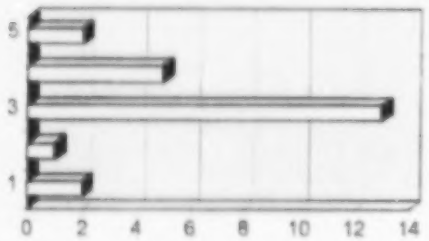
Teachers were further asked to indicate the extent of improvement in English language skills made by their students as a result of the *Crossroads Café* program materials. Nearly nine out of ten teachers reported at least some improvement among their students. Improvement was noted more in classroom programs, based upon the mean ratings of teachers.

Classroom teachers rated the level of improvement as 3.5 as compared to 3.0 in distance learning programs and 2.7 for those in hybrid programs. [Scale: 1 = no improvement; 5 = very substantial improvement; see Graphics 27 and 28.]

One possible explanation for these differences may be that the classroom setting offers more opportunity for student assessment, hence a greater likelihood of noticing improvement among learners.

Graphic 27: Student Improvement in English Language Skills Using *Crossroads Café* As Perceived by Teachers

	Number	%
Very Substantial Improvement [5]	2	8.7%
Substantial Improvement [4]	1	4.3%
Some Improvement [3]	13	56.5%
Slight Improvement [2]	5	21.7%
No Improvement [1]	2	8.7%
TOTALS	**23**	**100.0%**



Graphic 28: Mean Ratings of Teachers by Pilot Model

[Scale: 1 = no or none; 5 = most or very]

	Student Skills Improvement	Effectiveness of Materials
Classroom Model	3.5	4.1
Hybrid Model	2.7	3.9
Distance Learning Model	3.0	3.8

One distance learning teacher described her students' progress:

> *In the beginning, I would speak to my students in English and they would answer me in Spanish. It required a lot of encouragement on my part, but gradually they showed more and more confidence in speaking English after exposure to the program.*

Indicators of improvement in English language skills were identified by teachers (n=24) as follows:

Indicators of Improvement	**% Saying Yes**
Learners said their language skills improved	54
Workbook answers became more accurate	50
Spoken English improved noticeably	42
Written English improved noticeably	25
Learners used the answer keys less often	8

What effect did the program have on the learners' families?

One of the secondary unanticipated benefits of the *Crossroads Café* program, particularly as a distance learning model, was the promotion of family literacy. The ESOL learners and their teachers reported many cases in which the materials were shared with family and to a lesser extent friends. One teacher said: "Whole families seemed to enjoy [the videos] together. Parents have [told me] that everyone is improving their English as a result of the videos." Young children especially took an active role, either learning along with a parent or acting as a helper, "a very positive experience for all involved."

However, some participants regretted that family members were often too involved with other responsibilities to offer consistent assistance, although reports of families watching *Crossroads Café* together were common. Additionally, teachers suggested that cultural variations contributed to the level and type of family involvement that was found.

VII. DISTANCE LEARNING: SELECTED ISSUES

The *Crossroads Café ESOL Adult Learning Program* was designed to teach English to LEP adults, primarily as a distance learning model. The evaluation study presented in this report examined the implementation of *Crossroads Café* in three modalities — traditional classroom, hybrid, and distance learning — in order to explore its relative utility and effectiveness for ESOL instruction. However, the richness of the data has enabled us to take a more in-depth look at distance learning, both as an instructional method and as an organizational model. The data suggest that specific programmatic and pedagogical practices and procedures are required for the effective implementation of distance learning, either alone or as part of a hybrid model. The practices must be designed to ensure that students have unfettered access to the program materials and are supervised periodically by program staff.

Basically, teachers often felt hindered by the lack of time and proximity with their students and their inability to readily establish "rapport" or "close personal relationships" with them. They felt that telephone contact, which was the basis of most teacher-student interaction in these sites, was not sufficient and somewhat more precarious than face-to-face contact. "On the telephone, students can be lost in the snap of a finger," said one teacher. In some cases, students made themselves unavailable to talk on the phone because they were insecure about their vocabulary and pronunciation and, therefore, ill at ease trying to maintain a conversation. In a few other cases, students became truly unavailable when their phones were disconnected and/or mail was not acknowledged.

As a result, program staff went to great lengths to ensure that the essence of the traditional "student-teacher relationship" not be jeopardized in a distance learning setting. The consensus was that relatively frequent meetings, once every week or ten days, would be optimal in order to review the student's work, bolster conversational skills, and maintain a sufficiently close rapport. However, at sites where students were geographically dispersed

or where work or other responsibilities impeded such regularity, teachers met with students less often or not at all. Face-to-face meetings with one or more students were scheduled at designated times and places including the student's or teacher's home, the public library, or school building.

When direct contact was not feasible, telephone calls were made at appointed times either from teacher to student or the reverse. At least one teacher did not limit her students to scheduled calls; rather, she encouraged them to call "whenever there was a problem." Another teacher increased the length of telephone calls, as explained by her administrator:

> *The ESOL teacher [on my staff] felt that she could not live within the original model of a half hour per student. She expanded the time to one hour and still felt a need for additional time to correct all the work submitted by the students. She found the calls to require a great amount of time because she made use of both the Spanish and English language.*

One respondent emphasized the importance of allowing adequate telephone time. In her experience, she had found "a clear connection between [the amount of] teacher student contact and student success."

In some cases, the degree and type of contact was influenced by the ESOL level of the student, with lower level students requiring more frequent personal contact. Those students with less confidence or less independence required more personal contact.

Teachers felt that students working independently should have a semblance of structure in their work. Therefore, they "set goals" for their students by defining the nature and amount of work that was expected and sought to establish a sense of responsibility for compliance with these goals. One teacher explained that she made a "verbal contract" with her students to the effect that she would give her time and effort as long as they were willing to meet her expectations.

Detailed and conscientious record-keeping was vitally important in distance learning settings in order to establish a sense of continuity. Teachers kept comprehensive files on each student, including personal and background information, utilization of program materials, and progress in English proficiency. One teacher explained how she obtained and recorded "anecdotal" information about each of her students — "anything that would help me understand them," she said. For example, she inquired about the health of a student's child or the outcome of a spouse's job search. Such interaction not only strengthened the student-teacher relationship, but it encouraged the development of good conversational skills as well.

The administrative tasks associated with the duplication, distribution, and collection of videocassettes were, perhaps, the most tedious component of distance learning. Painstaking and varied procedures had to be established for the dissemination of materials. These procedures included designated pick-up and drop-off locations, such as the school building, library, mall, or other public places. Pre-paid mail delivery to and from the site and in-person home delivery/pick up by the teacher were also methods of cassette

distribution. In the more rural distance learning sites, where access to towns or cities was limited, one solution was to duplicate multiple units on extended cassette tapes to reduce the number of exchanges required.

Finally, a number of schools made "support services" available to *Crossroads Café* students. For example, in addition to the assistance of their ESOL teachers, learners could meet or talk with guidance counselors, resource teachers, or other adult education personnel, as needed. One site established a 24-hour "hotline" that was linked to an answering machine.

VIII. PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, based on information provided by program participants, the implementation of the *Crossroads Café* pilot may be described as a success. Administrators and teachers reported relatively little difficulty in initiating the program. In fact, they welcomed the opportunity to pilot new teaching materials, techniques, and modalities and were gratified at the progress made by their students. Their demonstrated resourcefulness in this venture has undoubtedly paved the way for the more widespread implementation of this initiative.

Learners were similarly enthusiastic about the program, particularly their ability to integrate home and classroom study. For many, ESOL instruction would not have been possible without this option. These learners also reported relatively little difficulty in adapting to the pilot program. Despite the frequent conflicting demands of school, work, and family, most learners diligently completed the prescribed workload, and many felt they improved their English proficiency.

The dedication and skill of the administrators and teachers, the motivation and perseverance of the ESOL learners, and the high-quality and compelling nature of the program materials helped ensure the successful implementation of the pilots. However, this evaluation would do a disservice to ESOL educators and learners if it focused only on the program success. One primary goal in conducting this study was to ascertain how best to implement *Crossroads Café* as a distance learning model for ESOL instruction. In this regard, the team of evaluators listened carefully to the opinions and advice of program participants who, during the course of the summer, discovered first hand how to make the *Crossroads Café ESOL Adult Learning Program* viable both in terms of its teaching methods and program features. Recommendations derived from this experience are reported as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Crossroads Café Program Materials

- Program materials that address grammar and usage skills should be expanded, especially those geared to higher level learners. Work sheet exercises in English usage and tied to the *Crossroads* context would be a valuable aid in instruction.

- *Crossroads Café* episodes should be available on audio cassette, primarily for those who have limited access to television and a VCR. In our opinion, the video component is essential to satisfactory use of *Crossroads Café* and cannot be replaced by audio alone. However, an audio tape and script would provide ancillary learner support.

- The *Worktexts* and *Photo Stories* should be designed so that written exercises are "removable" (e.g., perforated tear-out or looseleaf format) and can be given to instructors for correction.

- Some program administrators suggested that text materials consist of individually laminated sheets that can be erased and used again as a textbook, rather than using *Worktext* and *Photo Stories* as consumable commodities.

- A verbatim script for each video episode should be made available to instructors for use in developing ancillary classroom or homework exercises and to learners as a means of reinforcing what they have seen on the screen.

- A dictionary or glossary of key words, idioms, and other phrases found in the program materials should be made available to students for reference.

- Multiple episodes should be made available on a single video cassette, as an alternative to the single episode version, to facilitate the distribution of when weekly exchanges are precluded by logistical or scheduling difficulties.

- Devise a formula or method for determining the optimal number of videos and books that are required for distribution at program sites based on factors such as program model, number of students, method and frequency of distribution, etc.

Recruitment, Selection, and Placement of *Crossroads Café* Learners

- Organize booths or distribute fliers at community based sites such as public schools, health facilities, churches, food markets, and street fairs where those who need ESOL instruction may be reached directly.

- Encourage learners to select the text level — either *Photo Stories* or *Worktext* — with which they feel most comfortable when working with *Crossroads Café*.

- Run multi-lingual advertisements in the local media such as cable television, radio, and newspapers.

- Develop standardized materials for screening, placing, and monitoring *Crossroads Café* students. Establish criteria for identifying the potentially successful distance learner.

- Provide an orientation for prospective learners that describes the *Crossroads Café* program, provides "hands-on" experience with the videos and print materials, and

enables participants to speak directly with ESOL teachers and students who have previously participated in the program.

Professional Staff Training for *Crossroads Café* Instructors

- The pilot programs demonstrated the need for professional staff training for distance learning with *Crossroads Café*. Instructors whose past experience was almost exclusively in the classroom had difficulty transferring their skills to a distance learning mode. Staff training must be sufficiently intensive to provide instructors the same degree of comfort in a distance learning mode as they were accustomed to in a standard classroom situation.

- Conduct an orientation and training program that incorporates the following features:

  - Sessions led by administrators, instructors, and, when possible, learners who have participated in exemplary *Crossroads Café* programs.

  - Workshops offered to new *Crossroads Café* instructors on techniques for teaching in a distance learning setting, such as methods of effective telephone communication, systems for tracking and monitoring student progress.

  - Intensive, supervised use of *Crossroads Café* materials in a "distance learning internship" environment.

- Provide on-going opportunities for exchange of information among *Crossroads Café* professionals via web sites, seminars, newsletters, etc.

- Provide fully developed log forms for students and teachers to record as accurately as possible hours spent working on *Crossroads Café* materials. These records will be essential in documenting "time on task" as part of New York State's non-traditional funding formula for *Crossroads Café* hybrid and distance learning programs.

Program Implementation

- If financially feasible, enable learners to work with both texts in various configurations. The *Photo Stories* may precede the viewing of the episode and be used as an introduction or may be used later as a means of review. Some pilots reported that learners who worked at first with *Photo Stories* rapidly graduated to success with the *Worktexts*.

- Explore the different means available for distribution of the video cassettes to distance learners who cannot attend your center on any regular basis. Churches, local malls, schools, union halls, libraries and other more convenient sites may all be willing to be a repository for *Crossroads* cassettes. As a last resort, exchanging cassettes by mail may be the best practice. Have a plan before class begins.

- Organize learners to work on *Crossroads Café* materials cooperatively in groups either on or off site.

- As an adjunct to the *Crossroads Café* texts and tapes, auxiliary instructional materials should be provided for the learners to strengthen further their English usage skills. Exercises that emphasize and teach English grammar and glossaries of American idioms should be part of every ESOL teacher's arsenal.

- Teach the learners to be their own instructors in ESOL. Whatever group time is available, especially early in the semester, the learners must be taught how to teach English to themselves using *Crossroads Café* materials.

- Plan to spend at least one half hour individually by phone or in person each week with each learner in a distance learning or hybrid teaching mode, whenever feasible.

- Encourage learners to watch the videos at home with their families present, if possible.

- Design telephone work sheets for use by instructors in distance learning that structures and standardizes the telephone conversation with learners regarding *Crossroads Café* problems and progress.

- Maintain copious notes in a Learner Log that will track activities, problems, and progress, including personal data and other information that will encourage the development of a close rapport between learner and teacher.

- Arrange for face to face contact at least once, but more if possible, in even the most extreme distance learning situation. As a last resort, exchange photos or sponsor at least one social event that learners will likely be able to attend during the semester.

- Remind all instructors that their lessons will be more effective if they take the time to view the videos themselves before they assign them to their students for viewing.

- Although the videos need not be viewed in numerical sequence, viewing them in that order is favored, if feasible. However, after viewing episode number one, the remaining episodes need not be viewed sequentially.

- Instructors should maintain precise logs of "time on task" as reported by learners and as supplemented by instructional time spent with the teacher present.

- Prior to presenting the first episode of *Crossroads Café*, instructors should discuss with all learners the use of accented English as spoken by the *Crossroads Café* characters. Issues of added difficulty and the danger of learning "incorrect English pronunciation" should be discussed in terms of the realities of American society and the benefits that derive from becoming familiar with American English as it is commonly spoken.

IX Methodological Note

Quantitative data analysis was limited in some cases by the relatively small number of study participants and the even smaller number who responded to some of the survey

instruments. Whenever possible, both qualitative and quantitative responses in the analysis and ensuing discussion of the findings were incorporated into the study. Nevertheless, caution must be used in interpreting results and generalizations must be made with care.

The research design was based on the assumption that each pilot site would implement only one program model. As such, each site was assigned an identification number for purposes of data entry and data processing. Four sites, however, did in fact report having two models each. Consequently, the analyses reflect the aggregate responses in these four models, i.e. responses may be counted twice — once for each program model. For purposes of piloting the research design and survey instruments, as well as the program models, the overall findings and conclusions have not been altered significantly. Subsequent tracking, monitoring, and research involving *Crossroads Café* programs need to collect data by program, rather than by site. Additional analysis may be performed on sites with single models only.

X Implications for Further Research

Subsequent *Crossroads Café* programs will be implemented in a variety of distance learning modes. Therefore, future research needs to focus on student outcomes in terms of distance learning practices, student characteristics, and policy changes that will foster distance learning. Future research needs to identify and document those distance learning practices that are most likely to produce student gains for students with particular educational, social, and cultural characteristics. Further research is also warranted with populations completely new to the adult education experience, as the pilot sites served only adults with prior exposure.

Encouraging provider agencies to adopt distance learning practices introduces a difficult financial component to the relationship that currently exists between the state and the providers. The funding mechanisms available to New York State need to be re-examined to identify those that will help the state attain its educational goals while keeping within its budget. Even if future research shows that student achievement in distance learning is comparable to student achievement in the classroom setting, provider agencies still may be unable to adopt these practices. Since current New York State regulations reward increased contact hours, provider agencies could suffer increased financial hardship by implementing a distance learning structure that will reduce contact hours. Therefore, in these circumstances, the New York State needs to reconfigure the reimbursement formula to encourage distance learning instruction and to extend hybrid models in the direction of distance learning.

SUMMARY

In summary, the research goals of this evaluation study were effectively met, despite some of the methodological limitations described above. The *Crossroads Café* pilot study demonstrated the relative ease of establishing ESOL instruction programs using these materials in all three program models. Moreover, within the limitations of this study, the

effectiveness of *Crossroads Café* as a vehicle to promote ESOL distance learning was also demonstrated, thus providing a viable means of helping heretofore unreachable learners.

However, three major issues still need to be resolved before distance or hybrid learning programs can be institutionalized: [1] Teachers need to be trained in distance learning methods; [2] Program logistics require special attention to facilitate transfer of videos and text materials between instructors and teachers; and [3] A state reimbursement formula for service providers must be established that adequately and fairly funds school districts, BOCES, and CBO's which choose to conduct distance learning programs.

By means of this formative evaluation, the implementation process of the *Crossroads Café* program was examined and its relative success as an instructional model was explored. The information provided by teachers, administrators, and students who participated in this pioneering effort will help others institutionalize *Crossroads Café* program with some measure of efficiency.

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